

1472

A TRACT

FOR

PASSION WEEK,

CONTAINING

REFLECTIONS ON PALM SUNDAY, GOOD FRIDAY,
AND EASTER EVE.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to mock and to scourge and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again.—ST. MATT. xx, 18, 19.

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PASSION WEEK.

O Thou, who through this holy week
Didst suffer for us all :
The sick to cure, the lost to seek,
To raise up them that fall :

We cannot understand the woe
Thy love was pleas'd to bear :
O Lamb of God ! we only know
That all our hopes are there !

Thy feet the path of suffering trod ;
Thy hand the victory won :
What shall we render to our God
For all that He hath done ?

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Holy Ghost,
By men on earth be honor done,
And by the heavenly host.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? behold, and see
if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.—LAM. i, 12.

T. 8

PALM SUNDAY.

GAL. vi, 14.

“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

TO-DAY begins the most solemn week in the whole year, the great and holy week of the Passion (or suffering) of our blessed Lord. From beginning to end of it one thing is held up to us, even the *Cross of Jesus*. On that we are bidden to fix our eyes. It is that which must fill our hearts. Day by day in the services of the Church is read the wonderful story of the Saviour's death. Day by day we are called upon to go up, as it were, in spirit to Calvary, and gaze on that blessed and awful sight. A voice seems to speak to us from heaven, saying, “Go up and behold:—behold your Lord and your God sinking under the cross, which He bears for you: behold Him nailed to the accursed tree, bleeding with the strokes of the cruel scourge, torn with the thorns they have put upon His holy brow: behold Him raised high in the

air, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, while the world stands round and mocks His agony : behold Him worn out with His awful weight of suffering, bowing His head, and giving up the ghost. Listen to His sacred voice praying for His murderers : listen to His blessed promise to the penitent thief beside Him : listen to His words of fearful woe, when even the presence of the Father seemed for a while withdrawn, ‘My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ listen to that last piercing cry, when He gave up His spirit to God. Look upon the earthquake, and the sudden, awful darkness, and the rending of the veil of the Temple, and the rising of the dead from their graves.” Nay, let not man’s weak words try to picture that mighty scene. Go to God’s own Word. Read there, day by day this week, of these things. And as you read try to realize—to make it *real* to your hearts. Bring it all before you. See it. Hear it. Stand there, amid the darkness and the signs and wonders, and try to feel yourself in the very presence of that scene, the most marvellous the world has ever known—God hanging in death upon the Cross for man.

Oh ! can we stand unmoved before Him who, though He was God from everlasting, put off His glory, and took upon Him our flesh that He might suffer these things for us ? Can we see unmoved the load of our sins weighing down the spotless Lamb of

God even unto death? “Surely He hath borne *our* griefs and carried *our* sorrows.” “He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.”

And yet, alas! it is too true that we *can* see and hear these great things unmoved—nay, that many do so. Year by year we are called upon to behold and to listen to them. They are brought before us, whether we will or no. But how often do they rouse in us no awe, no worship, no fear, no gratitude, no love, no zeal, no penitence. How often are we like Gallio, who “cared for none of these things.” Oh! how is it that there are such numbers, who do make some outward profession of religion, yet are so wholly wanting in its spirit and power? Surely the fault is in the root of the whole matter. It is *want of faith* which makes the Cross of Christ so dull and cold a subject to so many, which hides its wonders and its glories from the passer-by. The eye of the soul is shut: so how can it see that which it is bidden to look upon? It is asleep, and opens not: so how can it gaze upon the great things held up before it?

And now, how shall we spend this Passion Week with profit? How shall we win a blessing from it as it passes?

First, let us try to fill our minds with the one great

thought of Christ's suffering and death. Whatever our business or work, let us take this thought with us, and dwell upon it as often and as long as we can.

Secondly, let us turn this thought into prayer. Let us lift up our hearts very often to the throne of grace in secret prayer; thanking God for the great Redemption wrought for us, and asking Him to help us to love our Saviour better and to become more like Him.

Thirdly, let us take for our guidance our Lord's own rule, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Let us practise some self-denial—give up something for Him who gave up all for us.

Fourthly, let us, if we have the power, seek God's house more often, and not mind if it puts us to some little trouble to do so. Or, if we cannot do this, let us at least read at home those portions of God's Word which are fixed for the different days of this week, and try to print its great lessons deep on our minds.

Fifthly, let all who have been confirmed prepare themselves in a very careful and solemn manner for the Easter Communion. Surely, all who love their Lord, and whose hearts this week have been filled with the thought of His most precious Body broken and Blood poured forth for them, ought to be present at the sacred feast at Easter.

But are we to think of these things only for one short week? Oh, no! It is good for us to have times and seasons fixed for the *special* thought of the great truths of God: but, unless these times and seasons have some *lasting* fruit, they are truly thrown away. Our lesson this week is to glory in nothing "save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." But God help us *always* to love that Cross better. God keep alive in us its sacred lessons, till we can take up *our* cross daily, and "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth;" till we can feel that "the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world;" till we can say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Almighty and everlasting God, who of Thy tender love toward mankind, hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility; mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Tell ye the daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass."

Ride on ! ride on in majesty !
Hark, all the tribes Hosanna cry :
O Saviour meek, pursue Thy road,
With palms and scatter'd garments strew'd.

Ride on ! ride on in majesty !
In lowly pomp, ride on to die !
O Christ, Thy triumphs now begin
O'er captive death and conquer'd sin.

Ride on ! ride on in majesty !
The Angel armies of the sky
Look down with sad and wondering eyes,
To see the approaching Sacrifice.

Ride on ! ride on in majesty !
The last and fiercest strife is nigh :
The Father on His sapphire Throne,
Expects His Own anointed Son.

Ride on ! ride on in majesty !
In lowly pomp, ride on to die !
Bow Thy meek Head to mortal pain,
Then take, O God, Thy Power, and reign.

Reign on ! reign on in majesty !
Reign on in triumph, Lord most High !
We hymn Thee on Thy Throne of love,
Almighty King, in realms above. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY.

ST. JOHN xix, 5.

“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man !”

How simple, and yet how perfect, is this picture ! A few short words, and yet we can see it all. Let us stop and gaze upon it ; for it is not a picture to be lightly passed by. See. He comes forth from the judgment-hall, “wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe.” And who is this that comes forth ? It is the “man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ;” it is Jesus of Nazareth, the “despised and rejected of men ;” and yet (oh ! wonderful love !) it is our Saviour, our King, our God. There He stands, and we can see the bleeding brow, and the smitten face, and the mangling of the cruel scourge ; we can see the look of patient suffering, of holy meekness, of tender love. And Pilate points Him out to us, and says, “Behold the man.” And can we turn away from such a picture ? Does it not touch and melt our hearts ? Do we not hear His pleading voice as He stands there in His crown and robe of mockery,

crying to us and saying, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow?"

Or pass on a few hours, and look upon another picture. It is a still more wonderful and touching one. Pass on from the judgment-hall to Calvary. Go, and stand afar off, in loving awe and lowly reverence, and behold that awful sight. See there that dim Cross standing up against the darkened mid-day sky. Trace the suffering Form that hangs upon it. Mark the drops of blood falling fast from the piercing thorns upon His sacred head, and raining down from the cruel nails in His holy hands and feet. Once again, "Behold the man!" And know that He you look upon is none other than your God, giving His most precious Body, shedding His most precious Blood, to save you from the wrath to come. Oh! "is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

Such are the pictures Good Friday sets before our eyes. It is a day to be much observed amongst us—a day to fill our whole hearts and minds with thoughts of the Cross of Christ. It is a solemn, mournful, day; a day of fasting and prayer; a day for much secret thought, and self-examination, and repentance.

Let us try to think of Jesus Himself watching our hearts to see how the great things of this day touch them, and what will be their fruit in us. Alas! how many go upon their way—of business or pleasure, it

matters not which—and never turn aside even for a moment to gaze where their Saviour Himself hangs bleeding for them. They hurry on : it is *nothing* to them : and they pass by. But *is* it really nothing to them ? They may think it so, and feel it so, but it cannot really be so. It *must* make a difference to them, for good or for ill, whether they will or no. They cannot despise their Lord, and refuse to heed Him, and “pass by,” and be none the worse for it. If they will not know Him as their living and crucified Saviour, they *shall* know Him, one day, as their wrathful and terrible Judge.

But many stop to gaze. There are many eyes that turn to look on the wondrous scene. But not all alike : not all in the spirit of faith and love. A great many look because it is the custom to look. They go to church, and listen to the story of their Saviour's death, because it is the right thing to do. But though that solemn story falls on the ear, does it always go down deeper ? Does it always get to the heart ? Is it never heard with listless weariness, with idle unconcern ? Let us each make sure, at least, about ourselves. How have *we* heard this story ? How have *we* looked upon the great Good Friday pictures ? Have we really taken our part in the great scene ? If we have been standing by the Cross of Jesus at all, has our place been with the careless, godless, Roman soldiers, who, though so near the

Cross, knew nothing of its power and its love; or with the holy women who "stood afar off," gazing with full hearts on that sight, from which the very sun in heaven hid its face? Has it all been a real living thing to our hearts? Has it filled them, so that there was no room for vain and idle (and much less for sinful) thoughts this day? Have we really felt, and mourned, and loved? Remember, there may be much inward coldness under much outward observance. The great question is, Do we love the Lord or no? If we *do* love Him, we *cannot* pass by all His sorrows and His sufferings for us, with hearts cold and unconcerned.

God grant that this day may not be without its fruit in us, but that we may so learn its holy lessons that "Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God." Amen.

O Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who wast given both to be a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life; who did'st bid us take up our cross and daily follow Thee; make, we pray Thee, the yoke of Thy commandments sweet, and the burden of Thy cross light unto our souls. Conform Thy servants, O Lord, to the likeness of Thy passion; give us grace, O Eternal Father, that we strive to keep the way of the holy cross, and carry in our hearts the image of Jesus crucified. Make us cheerfully resign ourselves to Thy divine will, that, being fashioned after His life-giving death, we may die according to the flesh, and live according to the spirit of righteousness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and only Saviour. Amen.

“Jesus said. It is finished; and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.”

JESU, Who didst set us free
From sin's curse and tyranny;
By Thy death Thou life dost give.
Life to all who Thee receive.

While each solemn function high
Of that woeful mystery
On the Cross Thou deign'st to bear,
Saviour, with most loving care:

“Finishing” the Rite of rites!
“Finishing” the last of fights!
“Finishing” life's shadowy race!
“Finishing” the Work of Grace!

While death's hour is hast'ning on,
While life's strength is all but gone,
While the end Thou'rt bent to meet,
While the task is just complete;

In a word the sum is said—
Thou dost cry “’Tis finished!”
Yea, the Lord is crucified!
Yea, for us the Lamb hath died!

Now His precious Blood is shed!
Now our souls are ransomed!
Now is Satan's power braved;
Christ hath died, and man is saved! Amen.

EASTER EVE.

PSALMS xxiii, 4.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me : Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.”

How strangely calm and solemn are the thoughts which this day brings ! It was the Jewish Sabbath, the day of *rest*. And Jesus *rests* in the dark and silent chamber of the tomb. “It is finished”—the sad life of sorrow and of suffering—the pathway of grief—the journey of pain. No more toil, and want, and misery ; no more sighing and tears ; no more hatred and enmity ; no more mocking and insult ; no more agony and sorrow of soul even unto death ; no more smiting, and jeering, and buffeting, and spitting on ; no more fainting under the weight of the cross ; no more rending with the scourge ; no more piercing with the nails ; no more crowning with the thorns : no more hanging by those bleeding hands and feet to the bitter cross ; no more dying in the lingering torture of a felon’s shameful execution.

“It is finished”—all that the prophets prophesied,

and the types foreshadowed. "Messiah is cut off, but not for Himself." "He is cut off out of the land of the living." It has "pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." He hath made "His soul an offering for sin." "He hath poured out His soul unto death." "He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many;" and His fainting lips "made intercession for the transgressors"—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "And He hath made His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death," dying between the thieves—buried in the rich man's grave. And the Paschal Lamb has been truly sacrificed, and He is a Lamb "without blemish and without spot;" and "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so" now hath the Son of Man been "lifted up." And the Scapegoat is gone away into the wilderness, the Victim has passed to the unseen world with the sins of the people laid upon His precious head. The Scriptures are fulfilled. "It is finished."

Yes, all is over, and between the sad heart-rending scenes of Good Friday, and the glad and glorious news of Easter morning, there comes in this one calm day of rest and peace—rest for the weary Body, peace for the Soul set free. The Body rests in the silent tomb. The Soul is gone to Paradise.

And what is Paradise? We know not, save that

it is the happy place where the souls of those that "die in the Lord" are waiting for the fuller glory and happiness of the presence of God in heaven. There the penitent thief met his Saviour after death. And there we believe are gathered in a blissful rest all the "spirits of just men made perfect;" sharing in the special presence of their Lord, for to them to "depart" was to "be with Christ;" and looking forward, with a "hope full of immortality," to their "perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in eternal and everlasting glory."

And here, we may observe, that when our Creed says that Christ "descended into *hell*," the word "*hell*" does not mean *hell-fire*. It is quite a different word in the original language of the Creed, and means the "*place of the departed*;" and so the Creed only tells us that our Lord went down amongst the dead, which He did when He went to Paradise.

And, oh! what a happy place Paradise must be! "There the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." Surely there are times—times of sorrow, and weariness, and disappointment—when all, who have any thought of these things, would "desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He gives that rest even here; but,

oh! how far sweeter must be the rest He gives in Paradise! "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest."

And while Christ is dead in the silent tomb, let us think of *our* death. It is fast drawing near. It will not tarry long. *Our* bodies, too, unless we be alive at the coming of the Lord, will soon sleep in the dark, cold, grave. Are we afraid to die? Does the "valley of the shadow of death" look very dark and terrible to our weak faith? Nay, why should we fear it? Jesus has passed through it before us. He has robbed it of its terrors. Do we fear to go to Him? Do we fear to be with Him? Is it so fearful to hear the words, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise?" We only want more faith—faith to look beyond the narrow stream that parts us from the promised land—faith to believe in the Saviour's blessed presence even as we pass through the dark waters. How well for us to be able to say, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with Him ; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

“ And when Joseph had taken the Body, he wrapped It in a clean linen cloth, and laid It in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock. And there was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.”

RESTING from His work to-day
In the tomb the Saviour lay ;
Still He sleeps, from Head to Feet
Shrouded in the winding-sheet,
In the rocky tomb alone,
Hidden by the sealed stone.

Late at even there was seen
Watching long the Magdalene ;
Early rose, as rested late,
By the sepulchre to wait,
In the holy garden glade,
Where her buried Lord was laid.

So with Thee, till life shall end,
I would solemn vigil spend ;

Let me hew Thee, Lord, a shrine
In this stony heart of mine ;
Where, in pure embalmed cell,
None but Thou may ever dwell !

Myrrh and spices will I bring,
True affection's offering ;
Close the door from sight and sound
Of the busy world around :
And in patient watch remain,
Till my Lord appear again. Amen.

By Thine agony and bloody sweat;
By Thy Cross and Passion;
By Thy precious Death and Burial;
By Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension;
By the coming of the Holy Ghost:

GOOD LORD DELIVER US.



